

# **Strengthening Families Initiatives**

**David E. Suttle, MD**  
**Director, Office of Family Health Services**  
**Virginia Department of Health**  
**September 2003**

# **The Office of Family Health Services**

- ✍ **Manages several programs which help to strengthen families.**
- ✍ **The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has collaborated with the Department of Social Services since 1998 to operate family strengthening programs using Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds.**

# **Virginia Abstinence Education Initiative (VAEI)**

- **The VAEI mission is to enable youth to develop attitudes and skills necessary to delay sexual involvement until marriage. VAEI funds and oversees five model school-based abstinence education programs that incorporate the principle of the eight-point federal definition of abstinence.**

# **Virginia Abstinence Education Initiative**

- **These five programs provided education to 3,858 youth in several communities throughout Virginia in FY 03.**
- **VAEI sponsors a state-wide media campaign, “Not Me, Not Now”.**
- **VAEI targets parents as well as youth.**
- **The initiative operates a toll-free telephone number, 1-877-CANWAIT.**

# **Virginia Fatherhood Campaign (VFC)**

**VFC works to:**

- **address the negative health and developmental outcomes associated with a father's absence from the family.**
- **involve fathers in supporting children and keeping them involved with their children and families.**
- **improve the quality of their parenting.**

# **Virginia Fatherhood Campaign (VFC)**

- **VFC sponsors state-wide media campaigns. In FY 03, 1040 public service ads were aired.**
- **The VFC conducts regional workshops and training for public and private non-profit family service providers.**

# **Right Choices for Youth (RCFY)**

- **RCFY helps communities organize around positive societal messages for youth development and behavior.**
- **The goal is to enable young people to make right choices and avoid unhealthy risk behaviors concerning alcohol, drugs, sex, tobacco, and violence.**
- **Started in 1999, RCFY has been solely supported through TANF funds.**

# **Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Initiative (TPPI)**

- **TPPI programs employ several strategies to help reduce teenage pregnancy.**
- **Teen parents are more likely to not finish school, to live in poverty, and to continue the cycle of teenage parenthood.**



# Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Initiative (TPPI)

- Some programs also provide mentoring and one-on-one counseling.
- Many programs use the “Baby Think it Over” infant simulators. VDH is working with sites to evaluate the effectiveness of the approach.

# **Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Initiative (TPPI)**

- **Between 1993 and 2001, the overall state teenage pregnancy rate per 1,000 females ages 10-19 declined from 38.9 to 29.7, a drop of nearly 25%.**
- **TPPI strengthens the family unit by helping adolescents avoid early pregnancy before they are ready to start families.**

# **Bright Futures Guidelines**

- **These guidelines, were developed under the leadership of the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services.**
- **They recognize that partnerships between the family, health professionals, and communities are necessary to promote the optimal health of children and their families.**
- **One major goal is to increase family skills, knowledge, and participation in health promotion and prevention activities.**

# **Bright Futures Guidelines**

- **Consistent with the mission of Bright Futures, OFHS has been a leader in the promotion of family-centered care.**
- **VDH and the Departments of Medical Assistance Services, Education & Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services have adopted this as the standard of care and overall guidance for health policy and program development.**

# Care Connection for Children (CCC)

- There are an estimated 190,600 children with special health care needs in Virginia.
- This Title V state program for these children has transitioned its service delivery model to a family-centered model.
- Centers have evolved from Children's Specialty Services Clinic System that has operated in Virginia since the 1930's.

# Care Connection for Children (CCC)

- These centers provide care coordination to children with physical disabilities.
- The CCC network consists of six centers affiliated with hospitals providing pediatric specialty services.
- Some centers provide clinic services to children when the multidisciplinary service is not readily available in the community.
- Services are community-based and family-centered as parents are treated as partners.

# Care Connection for Children (CCC)

- Centers work with various parent support groups, such as Family Voices and Parent-to-Parent, to improve care for children with special health care needs.
- Care coordination helps to strengthen families as it helps families obtain insurance, find a medical home, get referrals to specialists, get needed services and coordinated care between multiple providers for their children.

# **Child Development Clinics**

- **As part of of the Children with Special Health Care Needs Program, VDH operates eleven federally funded child development clinics across the state.**
- **Their goal is to promote the optimal physical, social, mental, and emotional development and well-being of children served.**
- **Services are community-based and family-centered. Families are included in planning treatment.**
- **Children may be referred from any source such as parents and local physicians.**



# **Child Development Clinics**

- **The clinics work closely with local school systems and social service agencies.**
- **Services have operated in Virginia since 1955.**
- **Currently, clinics are located in Arlington, Danville, Fredericksburg, Gate City, Harrisonburg, Lynchburg, Newport News, Norfolk, Petersburg, Roanoke, and Winchester.**

# **Pediatric Screening and Genetic Services**

- **The Office of Family Health Services manages several newborn and early childhood screening program. These programs include:**
  - **The Virginia Early Hearing Detection & Intervention Program.**
  - **The Newborn Screening Services Program.**
  - **Lead-Safe Virginia (Prevention & screening for lead poisoning).**

# **Pediatric Screening and Genetic Services**

- **These programs strengthen the family unit through early identification and referral into treatment for conditions that cause disability or even death in some cases.**
- **Of the 95,000+ infants born in Virginia each year, an estimated 3,700 babies are born with disabilities that may impede their ability to hear, learn and grow into healthy children and adults.**

# Virginia Early Hearing Detection & Intervention Program

- As mandated by the Code of Virginia, newborns are screened for hearing impairment prior to hospital discharge through this program.
- In 2002, 95% of infants born in Virginia received this screening, which resulted in 66 confirmed cases of congenital hearing loss.
- This program helps strengthen families by promoting principles related to family-centered care.

# **Virginia Newborn Screening Services**

- **As mandated by the Code of Virginia, newborns are tested for eight different conditions.**
- **Finding these infants and giving them early treatment prevents serious complications such as mental retardation, permanent disabilities or even death.**
- **In 2002, 87 infants were identified with one of these condition and received treatment.**

# **Virginia Newborn Screening Services**

- **Metabolic treatment services are provided infants in medically indigent families through MCV in Richmond and the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.**
- **Special food products are provided for children and pregnant women in Virginia who have been diagnosed with phenylketonuria (PKU).**
- **In 2002, 109 persons received formula and/or food products through the state program.**

# **Lead Safe Virginia**

- **Lead poisoning interferes with normal brain development.**
- **Elevated blood-lead levels are associated with lower IQ's.**

# **Lead Safe Virginia**

- **The primary source of lead exposure in our environment is dust from lead-based paint, found in many of Virginia's 1.8 million homes built before 1978.**
- **This program works to eliminate children's exposure to lead in the Commonwealth by providing public health education to families about lead poisoning.**



# **Lead Safe Virginia**

- **Families of children with elevated blood-lead levels receive counseling on nutrition, environmental lead hazard assessment and lead hazard reduction and medical case management.**
- **Families are linked to resources to help make their home lead safe.**

# **Lead Safe Virginia**

- **Lead Safe Virginia sponsors screening for blood lead levels.**
- **In 2002, over 50,000 children (under 72 months of age) in Virginia were tested and 1,200 were found to have elevated blood lead levels.**

# Lead Safe Virginia

- **Virginia recently enhanced its lead screening regulations:**
  - All children are to be screened for risk factors for lead poisoning.
  - Children who can not be determined to be at low risk are to be tested.
  - Provides parents with the option of requesting testing for their child even if determined to currently be at low risk.

# Healthy Child Care Virginia

- This program promotes safe and healthy day care sites and seeks to enhance programs and their ability to help children achieve optimal brain, emotional, and physical development.
- Approximately 100 public health nurses have been trained as child care healthy consultants to offer training and assistance to day care providers, both licensed and unlicensed.

# **Virginia Healthy Start Initiative (VHSI)**

- **Aimed at reducing infant mortality and low birth weight babies among African Americans.**
- **African Americans are disproportionately affected by poor birth outcomes and have twice the rate of infant deaths as whites.**
- **Started in four communities: Norfolk, Portsmouth, Petersburg and Westmoreland.**
- **VHSI provides nutrition services for pregnant women and infants and case management services.**

# **Virginia Healthy Start Initiative (VHSI)**

- **The program also conducts Fetal and Infant Mortality Reviews.**
- **In the past year VHSI has served 864 mothers and infants and have had no infant deaths among participants.**
- **VHSI is important in strengthening families because it provides support to pregnant women and their families, improves birth outcomes and encourages the positive growth and development of their children so they can contribute to society.**

# **Resource Mothers in Virginia**

- **This program mentors teens and young adults to ensure healthy babies and healthy families in 27 communities and 80 localities.**
- **Since its inception in 1986 it has been successful in:**
  - **Reducing the number of low birth weight babies.**
  - **Delaying repeat pregnancies.**
  - **Increasing the number of teens who stay in school or work.**
  - **Strengthening families by encouraging father's involvement and support of the baby.**

# Statutory Rape Awareness Project (Sexual Coercion)

- Statutory Rape is not a legal term in Virginia. This causes some confusion around the issue. A common understanding of statutory rape refers to an adult engaging in sexual activities with a minor teen.
- Components of the project include data collection, an awareness campaign, and training.